US History Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Government Response to the Great Depression: Herbert Hoover**

**Herbert Hoover** – “The Presidents” History Channel series

Elected president in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Personality and background | Ideas about the role of government | Policies and actions |
|  |  |  |

**Rugged Individualism -**

**Assignment**:

Full paragraph response: typed or on a lined sheet of paper.

How much should presidents be held responsible for national disasters (both of the natural and unnatural sort)? Use the Great Depression and one modern-day event to support your point.

**Herbert Hoover, "Rugged Individualism Speech" (October 22, 1928)**

*Herbert Hoover closed his campaign for the presidency in 1928 with this speech.  It expresses the philosophy not only of Hoover, but of the Republican Party during the 1920s.  As you read, think about what sort of role Hoover sees for the federal government in the economic affairs of the nation.  Why does Hoover favor such a role for the government? Also, think about in what sense Hoover’s response to the Great Depression might be seen as an extension of the philosophy he articulates here.*

I intend... to discuss some of those more fundamental principles upon which I believe the government of the United States should be conducted....

During one hundred and fifty years we have builded [*sic*] up a form of self government and a social system which is peculiarly our own.  It differs essentially from all others in the world.  It is the American system.... It is founded upon the conception that only through ordered liberty, freedom and equal opportunity to the individual will his initiative and enterprise spur on the march of progress.  And in our insistence upon equality of opportunity has our system advanced beyond all the world.

During [World War I] we necessarily turned to the government to solve every difficult economic problem…To a large degree, we regimented our whole people temporally into a socialistic state.  However justified in war time, if continued in peace-time it would destroy not only our American system but with it our progress and freedom as well.

When the war closed, the most vital of issues both in our own country and around the world was whether government should continue their wartime ownership and operation of many [instruments] of production and distribution.  We were challenged with a... choice between the American system of **rugged individualism** and a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines ­ doctrines of paternalism and state socialism.  The acceptance of these ideas would have meant the destruction of self-government through centralization... [and] the undermining of the individual initiative and enterprise through which our people have grown to unparalleled greatness. …

I would like to state to you the effect that... [an interference] of government in business would have upon our system of self-government and our economic system.  That effect would reach to the daily life of every man and woman.  It would impair the very basis of liberty and freedom....

I do not wish to be misunderstood.... I am defining general policy.... I have already stated that where the government is engaged in public works for purposes of flood control, of navigation, of irrigation, of scientific research or national defense... it will at times necessarily produce power or commodities as a by-product.

Nor do I wish to be misinterpreted as believing that the United States is a free-for-all and devil-take-the-hindmost.  The very essence of equality of opportunity and of American individualism is that there shall be no domination by any group or [monopoly] in this republic.... It is no system of laissez faire....

The greatness of America has grown out of a political and social system and a method of [a lack of governmental] control of economic forces distinctly its own­ our American system ­which has carried this great experiment in human welfare farther than ever before in history.... And I again repeat that the departure from our American system... will jeopardize the very liberty and freedom of our people, and will destroy equality of opportunity not only to ourselves, but to our children....